

THE GADFLY

St. John's College
Annapolis, Maryland

Settling In

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THE STRUCTURE

Λόγος holds news reports and narratives of immediate relevance to the Polity. The purpose here is to develop a shared reservoir of information relating to campus life and the community.

Συμπόσιον offers the opportunity for our readers to thoughtfully consider contrasting opinions regarding a particular topic.

Πόλις serves as a platform for elevating voices in our community. Here we find letters to the editor, columns, cartoons, and submitted pieces.

Corrections to Vol. XLV, Issue 1

- In Tamar Pinsky's article "Registrar Resignation Leaves Students Spooked," a previous registrar at the College was referred to as "Jacki Thomas"; their name is actually "Thoms Jacqueline."
- At the end of section IV.§2 of Luke Briner's essay "A Critique of Dialogue," a citation is missing—this should be to: Robert C. Post, "Managing Deliberation: The Quandary of Democratic Dialogue," *Ethics*, Vol. 103, No. 4 (Jul. 1993), pp. 667-8.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Polity,

We hope that you're having a great start to the year, and that you loved the *Gadfly's* first issue of it! In this issue, we take a closer look at everything that's now very much underway at the College; new clubs, new inquiries, and new experiences. To provide a pleasant counterpoint to this, and to keep with the precedent set by the previous issue, we've also reproduced another foundational text by Barr on the nature of the Program as we know it, and thus on how we've actually gotten to where we are now. Enjoy!

Luke Briner,
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Robert Abbott, Assistant Dean and [Man Who Doesn't Want Me to Call Him the] Philosopher King

By Bennett Scott



Pictured: Assistant Dean Robert Abbott and Desistant Mean Obert Rabbott (Photo by Meliha Anthony)

Every interview I read has some description of its subject and the interviewing process at the beginning. I, unfortunately, consider myself the most contrarian interviewer in America. Thus, an at-best-tangential note: I wrote my first Gadfly article at Mr. Abbott's request. So blame him for all my madness-making.

Q: Who do you think you are?

I don't know.

You're a known fan of *Tristram Shandy*; how would you begin your fictional autobiography?

I would like to know how on earth did you know that I am a fan of *Tristram Shandy*? How widespread is this knowledge and what is it based on?

Research.

Oh. Oh. You're a reporter is what you're saying.

Mhm.

Tristram begins his narrative in a completely unmentionable way which I will not do. I would probably start with the rather dry observation that one's life has many origins. What's been interesting in mine has been discovering them. So I don't know, I would say something like "I was born in Virginia but came to consciousness in Annapolis."

If you could make a new SJC class, what would it look like?

If we had more time, I'd want to put on more law and German literature. I have thought about the art

preceptorial, but, as much as I love art and painting, I think it would be difficult to make a regular class. I really can't think of any that I would want to add.

What's been your greatest learning moment at St. John's?

I don't have a good answer; you're going to have to help me. All the ones that occur to me are from Freshman year and were in some way fundamental or profound though simple. Looking at a fish and realizing that I did not understand what causality was, and would not have any idea how one thing led to another in an organism. This is different, this is entirely different, but equally important: the first time I realized a tutor was reading my essay really carefully and they were taking what I was saying seriously and I could feel my whole person turning towards the effort of becoming a better writer because if that's going to happen—people are going to read my writing—I should get better at it. But I don't know how to rank these things.

[There was banter here; as I am a reporter, this is called: Off The Record.]

Joining crew. I was a terrible athlete in high school. I remember being forced to play soccer in high school and I used to request to play 'fullback,' which I learned was a term I could ask to be. I could just slowly back off the field into the woods and nobody would notice. That was how bad my fear of being in a game or being observed was. But then I had this incredible experience of being on crew with then coach Leo Pickens and I realized physical exertion and being part of a team could be a path to self-realization and connecting with other people. He used to say at the beginning of the year "You show, you row," and it came to me as the year went on: "Oh right, all I have to do is show up, and all sorts of amazing things will happen. I don't have to be a certain person. I just have to show up."

What SJC traditions should we bring back from when you were a student?

Okay, so the good part about this question was my realizing that so many of the traditions that I love at the college are still here. I kind of came at it suspiciously like, "That's right Mr. Scott, there are so many things we need to bring back and I'm going to think of them." But then I thought: there's still the DC, the SCI, etc. There are a couple things I'd throw out there: film club (which is in a slump but might be coming back this year)...oh, what about adding a film class? I hadn't thought of that, but that would be

something I might seriously consider because I'm one of those crazy people who thinks there are great films *[His list of great films later included: Tokyo Story, Ran, The Night of the Hunter, Nights of Cabiria, The Four Hundred Blows]*. Anyway, the *sophistry contest*, do you know about that?, So back in the day as part of the Reality games there would be a *sophistry contest*, and it would often be between tutors. A question would be proposed, the one I recall being, 'Is Pindar right that water is best? Or maybe it was, 'Is a dry soul or a wet soul best?' and then the two people would have to argue the question with great seriousness and erudition. But what is the spirit of the tradition I'd like to see come back? Something like the alternation between seriousness and mirth. I know that's still present, but it's something I want to make sure we hold onto, cultivate it. I remember it from being a student, you know what I mean? One day you're in Rome, the next day it's carnival.

Also, guerilla seminars. Now it's true that that phrase is still in use at the college, but when I was a student it was strongly held that if the tutor didn't show up, class would still be held. It's your class. Our second Politics seminar there was a huge snowstorm and we, as a class, decided to have seminar. Not just our particular seminar, but any freshman who wanted to could come to this seminar.

Could the Johnnies of this generation, two of them of the strongest sort, lift, with great difficulty, a boulder that one from your generation could heft with ease?

Yes. I've seen it. To answer that in a serious vein, when I returned to interview [at the College] eleven years ago, I was asked if I had any questions myself, and I asked: how are the students different now? And the answer was: though very little at the college has changed, more has changed in the program than in the type of student who comes here.

[There will be a later BS article on our ensuing dispute about whether Johnnie typologies actually exist.]

Is SJC too encompassing for some people?

Yes. I often find myself in the somewhat ironic position of encouraging people to think beyond the College. Having been away from it, having come to love so many other worlds within our larger world, I am very ready to encourage people to find what is beyond it. Something happens to a lot of seniors and recent graduates; they think: "If I specify my area of

study, I will betray the college and I will narrow myself as a human being.” And it turns out somehow the opposite is true. By accepting some form of life or study, you move beyond the College into the larger world. I want students to feel like they’re expanding when they leave. I have no credibility when I say that because I’m an alum who’s come back, but I do hope people think I have arguments for it. I’ve participated in other traditions of learning. And I’ve taken up a vocation. In one way, it’s true that what the tutors and students are doing in the classroom is the same, that’s a fundamental principle of the college, but it’s also true that the tutors have a vocation that the students don’t.

What book were you annoyingly attached to as a student?

[Minutes were spent thinking on this question in silence.] I was probably the Johnnie who would just incessantly bring up Aristotle in seminar with complete honesty and genuineness, and say, ‘Actually, Aristotle says in On the Soul...’ and expect everyone to thank me for that helpful reference.

What story/legend/fable from your time as a student needs to be revived?

Sometimes the stories are the character of the person. It seems to me there were a lot of characters that were part of the legendarium when I was a student and one of them was Chaninah Maschler. She was German and then Dutch and had survived the war and become an American citizen. She was quite deaf by the time I knew her and [was] a titanic intellect, which she did not shy away from wielding, even on those who could not handle her intense questions. I will never forget her sitting at the table during question period and pounding the table with her fist and destroying a visiting lecturer because he had given a bad argument and it was intolerable to her that it should be allowed to stand. The room was packed, we were all titillated, and I thought this was the most amazing thing. But what has mattered in retrospect was not her pounding the table but seeing someone who cared so deeply about correct language.

Has the aesthetic loss of smoking in class and across campus weighed on you?

Yes. *[Eight second pause before the interviewer can no longer hold laughter in.]* Thank you, thank you Mr. Scott, let’s leave it at that.

You held fireside chats throughout last year in the

coffee shop in McDowell, a building known primarily for having burned down. Are you a man of irony?

Mr. Scott, I am a man of irony, but I never considered the great danger that I brought the college into. No. That never occurred to me. I do often think of McDowell burning down because one of the central things I’ve thought about in my life is Athens burning down, and, as someone who likes to think about disaster, I often imagine what it would be like if the tulip poplar on front campus fell. I don’t know if I’d be able to live through that. That’s going to be a terrible moment. And I certainly did not think about that with the fireside chats. The fireplace does not work very well and does fill the coffeeshop with smoke, rather ominously, so I am chastened.



McDowell Hall after the Fire of 1909, St. John's College Annapolis, Maryland

In the same vein, would you consider the Herman T. Wooters Memorial Ice Skating Rink?

The what?

Herman T. Wooters Memorial Ice Skating Rink, the man with the plaque in the boathouse who fell in the creek and drowned.

That is an incredibly bad joke Mr. Scott.

Thank you.

That poor man. No, I have often, as a lover of Tristram Shandy and the sentimental, I have often looked on that plaque with some sadness and a little bit of a smile, but mostly sadness. But that plaque had better stay up. One of my little projects is making sure the memorial plaques from the FSK lobby go back up. *[Pause.] Herman T. Wooters.*

Which St John do you think we're named after?
[There are 101 Saints John.]

It seems right that it would be John the Baptist because we're about beginnings.



Students Standing by the "St. John's College Founded 1696 as King William's School" Sign on College Avenue

Do you think SJC can claim to have truly started in 1696, or is this a ship of Theseus that we're drowning on?

Well, it's definitely a ship of Theseus. I wish we talked more about the founding of the new college. That is our college. That is the water we swim in. I want to honor that this institution has existed since 1696, but my college was the one founded by Barr and Buchanan and reformed by Jacob Klein. I wish we talked more about that. See? As I said, there's more than one beginning.

[Mr. Abbott spent the next minute threatening to destroy the transcript of this interview; things were going well.]

Should SJC be an ethical endeavor?

That's a really serious question. I am on the side of saying no for two reasons: I believe in its aim it should not be an ethical endeavor; I also don't think it's good for us to say it's an ethical endeavor. Many tutors whom I love and respect have expressed better

than I have that there's an ethical aspect to what we do at the college. But I think there's also a place for saying what we don't do. The college is involved in the process of becoming a good adult. I'm hesitant to say that we're teaching people how to be good. We're mostly about beginnings, not ends, not ethics.

How do we make SJC more unethical?

We could care about grades more and more. It would eat the endeavor from the inside out. Maybe get rid of grades. Say to the outside world, "We meant it when we said we didn't care about these." The only reason we haven't done that is we care about our graduates.

[A discussion ensues which leads us to a simple conclusion: GPAs at SJC ought to be given in the form of complex numbers or existing in non-Euclidean space.]

How emotional should we get when reading?

Pretty emotional. I think that the word sentiment is one way to talk about the connection between thought and feeling. I don't think there's a hard division. When you're reading a book, you're feeling certain things about it. Feel hard, if you can. How do you read a poem without feeling? In class, you feel longing for something, you don't even know what it is. I've run into more students who say "I hate Don Quixote" rather than that they feel something about it. It absolutely seems like a part of a seminar.

What's your favorite question?

"Why is there something rather than nothing?" I understand it's not the most interesting question because it doesn't really go anywhere, but I like what it does to me when I think it.

Does the hat have a name?

No! Maybe it should. *[The interviewer will be collecting a list of potential names, please email me with options to petition Mr. Abbott with.]*

What?

τί ἐστι. That's my answer.

Thank you for your time.

Oh Mr. Scott.

After our interview finished, Mr. Abbott promptly compared being interviewed to being tortured and wondered how he was going to work through the trauma of this experience (forcing his friends to listen to his agonies over dinner and then an intensive therapy session was the decision we came to).

Club Spotlight: Historia

By Tamar Pinsky

St. John's College has several publications such as Energeia (a literary and arts magazine), the Gadfly (which if you haven't realized yet, is a newspaper), and 814 Magazine (which publishes photography.) There used to be Historia as well, but it became inactive—not anymore! Georgia Green, a junior, as well as writing assistant, has started this academic magazine back up again. You finally have a place to send in all those essays you write for class (or essays you wrote not for class)!

What is Historia?

Historia was a publication of essays and other inquiries that existed as St. John's for some time but fell apart in 2019 due to the Covid pandemic. This year I am bringing it back as a journal with a focus on long-form essays.

How did you decide to restart Historia?

I was thinking about all the essays I read as a writing assistant, and it made me sad that other people do not get an opportunity to read all the great writing that we do here. I thought it would be fun to have a publication for people to show off their good work, whether that be essays written for tutorials or for pleasure.

How does it work?

We will open the submissions soon, and there will be guidelines sent out alongside. It will work similarly to Energeia – where you send your work to the

editors—and then it goes through an editing process. We hope to publish as many essays as possible.

Who is the archon?

I (Georgia Green) am the archon, and Luke Briner is the vice archon. There will be staff consisting of contributors and/or people who have expressed desire to be editors or layout editors.

What kind of Johnnies are you looking for?

Anyone who is excited about writing! Anyone whose essays show that they have put thought into their work. Or if you just want to edit or do layout, that is welcome as well. I know it is hard to be passionate about writing when you are forced to do it for class, but hopefully Historia will provide a space where you can find fun in the form of writing.

How often will there be Historia publications?

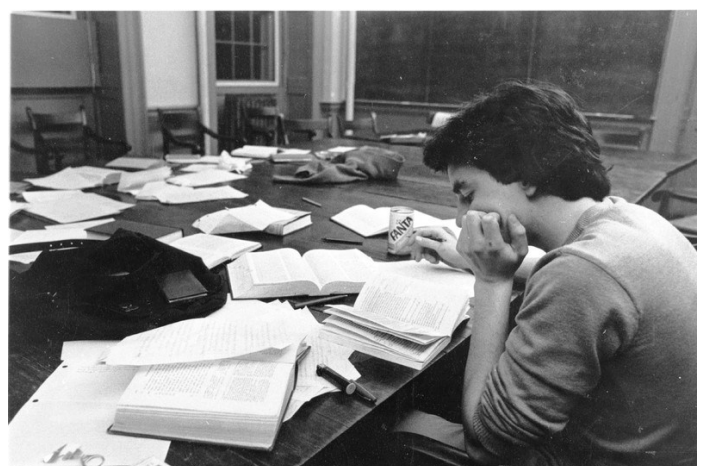
We are planning to have two publications per year—one for each semester. The first should be out before winter break, and the second one before the end of the year, close to graduation.

Any last words?

Look out for our email about submissions! I really encourage people to submit essays even if they are not your best work – we just want to hear your ideas. Also, if you are interested in editing or layout please reach out to gsgreen@sjc.edu!



Female Student Typing on a Typewriter in her Dormitory Room



Robert F. Vincent Studying at a Large Table with Books, St. John's College

Shaking Down Leftism at St John's College *By B.S.*

St. John's College is the mecca of *liberal* arts; our courses are diverse and our student body is trying to be, all in service of some 'liberation.' But what of the *conservative* arts? Where is the degree for budding young hardliners in support of weed being schedule 1 and Ronald Reagan never having done anything wrong; where is the degree which cares about facts, not feelings; where is the degree my uncle from rural Michigan wants me to have? Of course, you might argue: "But we actually engage with a great deal of what's considered the tradition of conservatism: Adam Smith, religious values, all of two women." Or you might say: "But this is an apolitical school! There's no place for explicit agendas in our hallowed halls." To both of you I say: goddamn liberals. I will not be intimidated by your critical and theoretical views. If this college won't give it to me, I'm gonna get my red-blooded all-American experience the truly conservative way: handshakes and controversy. And where better to do it than the most disgustingly free-thinking event of the year: the BLT party (Standing for: Black tie for self respecting individuals with values; Lingerie for the corrupted youth; and Togas for whatever weird Greek influence Percy Jackson had on this generation).

My first handshake of the night was before we even left the apartment: Benjamin Raymor Maier, my roommate. He was dressed like the worst man in Las Vegas, neck and collarbones and a little bit of chest out too. I might have judged him edging on lingerie showing that much skin, but as soon as I shook his hand I knew: this is a black tie man, this is a politician of the grand old ways, his elbow at a perfect ninety degrees, giving a strong pull in and a pat on the arm. By God, I'd vote for him and his invasions. When asked, midshake, who the worst deity was he said: "Xenu. The bad guy's bad guy of Scientology." With that, we departed.

On our way to the cesspool, I happened upon our old friend, Helen Felbek, Madam President of the Delegate Council. Her shake was a bit soft, very sober, and a little too tall (which has nothing to do with my own height or insecurities). When asked what the worst part about America is she said, "Americans" and tried to laugh it off as if it were a joke, as if she wasn't getting the privilege of living in the greatest

country on earth, God bless us. The only good thing I can say was that her outfit showed none of this licentious ardor so common to European youth.

From my disappointing encounter with "our" president, we turned into a back alley clearly labeled 'No freshmen or sophomores,' a requirement which I could get behind: keep 'em out, what do they know of our way of life? The music was tolerable and the lighting was dark. Frankly, I felt threatened knowing such alleys exist in my good community. But I swallowed my worries for now and got to work shaking hands.

Ian Glueckert was dressed like an intern at a real estate agent's retirement party and shook my hand the entire time we talked, but at least his answer to 'What's the worst element' (insincerity) was passable. James Dormer, on the other hand (it was actually the same hand), is a man who knows the right number of pumps: not too much, with a good rhythm as he told me about how we should outlaw mullets. Ranna Kiswani—a woman who knows how to rig elections—had a strong hand and a strong shake, a strength of conviction supporting her belief that we ought to annex Canada (this view got her broken up with once). The worst thing Joshua Tague has ever been described as is 'A Gentleman' and he's got the facial hair for it. John Teague made me feel like I was being welcomed into some secret lodge with a pull-in shake and the promise that "You want to change but what's always changing is you." Carter Brown was all positive vibes: asked if his hand might be shaken, he said "For you, of course," and proceeded to tell me every detail about his life. This is where things went downhill. Tait Geijer, with all his eight extra years of life on most of the people he was surrounded by, could shake a god given hand with that wide palm, but I still don't trust him (he said he's never had a bad date). Logan Arendt shook my hand twice, once weakly, once strongly, while trying to justify it by being "distracted" (what kind of man's man gets distracted when confronted with the most important thing this side of defending his country: a handshake?). Catherine Row had no tension in her wrist (am I a god damn royalist meant to kiss your hand?) and found absolutely no sexual tension in language class. Bridget Mace was dressed in a way that would have made my grandfather—a veteran,

mind you—wonder whether fighting on the beaches had been worth it, and only emphasized her unamericanness when asked “What’s the worst place” by answering “Cairo, Illinois.” Allyson Brink looked me dead in the eyes and said: “Jesus? Not for me” and smiled with too much enthusiasm (this is a woman who prefers the company of addicts to that of God!).

My night had started as an up and down sort of thing, but by this point, I was floundering and so too was the country I love: is this what we had come to? No one except me even saluted when the cops came to tell us to quiet down. There was ass and alcohol on all sides (neither attached to any particular persons because none of this counts as slander and, though committed to the bit, I am not a snitch). I saw the world spinning, felt my hand tingling, and in my ears was ringing. Were these not the people who had read *scripture*? Aquinas! Augustine! Aristotle! Would they approve of this? Where had it all gone? I had come in

pursuit of patriots and had let them all slip through my fingers. I looked around and all I saw were hands with cigarettes, with bottles of booze, clasping at each other and not in a handshaking and god fearing manner, no, clasping in a *sexual* manner! The music was drowned out by laughter and screaming. What could I do but run? Run out into the dangerous streets of Annapolis, all on my own, fleeing for my life, my virtue! As I stumbled out of that accursed place I saw those signs on the wall and I knew, I knew all at once: No freshmen. No sophomores. *No freshmen. No sophomores.* It was junior year that corrupted people. It was being enabled! Enabled into the cult of satanism and baby eating! The corruption of calculus. Of French. Of natural laws! My dear underclassmen readers, flee, flee while you still can: save your hand for shaking, not the devil’s work of vanishingly small love triangles. And for all those lost to the corruption: you have my thoughts *and* my prayers.



“All Handshaking is Entirely Platonic” (Plato photo credit: Britannica; artistic credit: BS)

Club Spotlight: The Platypus Affiliated Society

By Tamar Pinsky

You already do plenty of reading here at St. John's, but have you considered doing more? There's a new reading group this year, a chapter of the Platypus Affiliated Society, that is a great place to learn about the Left and Marxism from a non-authoritative lens. Come have discussions with your peers, whether you have previous experience with the subject matter, like archon Benjamin Kay does, or not at all—either way your presence is appreciated.

What is the Platypus reading group?

That is a more complex question than you might think. I didn't come up with it—we are connected to a larger organization which has chapters at many university campuses across the US, as well as some in Germany and Austria.

How did the Platypus organization start?

It started back in 2006, in response to questions like “why does the Left seem so incoherent?” They are not overly utopian or political, rather their approach involves going through the narrative of how people understood the Left throughout history.

How did you become involved with this society?

Last year, someone put up a poster about the Platypus reading group at Georgetown, DC. It turned out that it was Christian Cameler, the partner of a tutor at St. Johns, Ms. Picker. I drove with Mr. Cameler to the reading group on weekends.

Why is it called Platypus?

Some universities will have groups with very serious sounding names – not to say that the Platypus group is *not* serious, rather, the silly name is representative of the fact that we are not trying to give a dogmatic approach.

There is an actual funny story behind the Platypus name as well. In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx's collaborator, read in the newspaper about a new animal discovered in Australia, the platypus. He thought, “there is no way

this can be real, I've read my Darwin! This is ridiculous!” Then one day he went to a zoo in London, and he found himself proven wrong by a platypus there.

Just as Engels felt failed by Darwin, the Platypus reading group is about adjusting your approach when your schemas for understanding the world around you fail you, as they often did in the history of Leftism.

What does the reading list look like?

We are reading what Marx read and what he responded to, so a lot of Enlightenment era works. Right now we are reading Kant.

What sort of Johnnies are you looking for? How's the group going?

Obviously this is not going to appeal to everyone—with the extra reading and a couple of hours on your Saturdays. It is best when there is a consistent group of people so the conversations can continue each week, which we have been having.

Who is the archon? When and where are the meetings?

I (Benjamin Kay) am the archon. Email me at bhkay@sjc.edu if you have any questions. We meet in McDowell 31, from 2:30-1:00 on Saturdays.

Any last words?

If you have any interest, you should show up! There is no expectation that you have any prior knowledge. We are planning on having a guest lecturer soon, so look out for that. We are also going to have some film screenings like the French-German movie from a couple years ago called *The Young Karl Marx* and other biopics, if you would rather not work more reading into your schedule.

Freedom, Responsibility, and the Liberal Arts

By Stringfellow Barr

Pictured at right: the modern St. John's College logo/seal, adopted in 1937. →

EDITOR'S NOTE:

"Freedom, Responsibility, and the Liberal Arts" was a lecture delivered by Stringfellow Barr in 1938—at the dawn of our Program as we know it today. This lecture was later produced in the Gadfly in 1981—the paper's second-ever year at the College—and is produced again here now. -LB

The other day an interesting and curious gift arrived at St. John's College. It was a design in the form of a circular seal, and it was the work of a Harvard man who admires the educational program which this College has undertaken and who chose to express his admiration by designing this symbolic seal. In the center of the seal is a pair of scales, or balances. Around it in a circle are placed seven open books, representing the seven liberal arts. And around the open volumes is lettered the motto, *FACIO LIBEROS EX LIBERIS LIBRIS LIBRAQUE*. I suppose the motto may be fairly translated: "I make free men out of boys by means of books and balances." The punning on the stem of the Latin word for free is a serviceable pun now that liberal education is confronted with a world-wide decline of liberalism.

Like most liberals today, I am disturbed by the rise in many parts of the world of government by violence as a substitute for government by reason and consent. But unlike most liberals I know, I am much less disturbed by the overthrow of free government in states that were once democratic than I am by the confusion of the liberal mind in states like ours which are still technically free. You may argue that confusion in the liberal mind disturbs me because I know that such confusion is normally followed by the overthrow of free government. I agree that this is what normally happens; but even if you could assure me that "it can't happen here," I should still be



Seal of
St. John's College
1793

disturbed by the present state of liberalism. Because I agree with those who founded our Republic that what they and we have called free institutions cannot alone and of themselves make men truly free. Free institutions are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. The end is the freedom of individual men and women.

The real meaning of liberalism lies in the fact that man possesses free will, and that he is really and fully human only when that will is freely exercised. Because he possesses free will, he has the power to choose, to decide. You can prevent my exercising of my free will, so far as politics is concerned, by a number of methods. You can seize the government and close the polls. Or you can keep the polls ostentatiously open, and post armed men at them to see that I vote *Ja* in any plebiscite you hold. Or you can tell me to vote as I like but that I will lose my job if the wrong man wins. Or you can refrain from threatening my livelihood but see that I am kept misinformed through a censored press, so that I will "freely" choose the things you want me to choose. Or you can let me have all the information I want but see to it that my education is so defective that I lack the intellectual capacity to interpret the information when I get it. The last method would be the subtlest. For I can lose the freedom of my will just as surely through ignorance as through being sent to a concentration camp, and I shall have the added disadvantage of not knowing I have lost it.

Don't misunderstand me: Concentration camps are not merely disagreeable; they are a genuine check on the freedom of the will; they genuinely close out certain choices. All I am saying is that keeping out of concentration camps is not necessarily achieving freedom. Neither is having access to an uncensored press. Neither is having the rights of free speech and free assembly. These things merely widen the choices a free will may make if that will has learned to use and follow reason. It is

because of these distinctions that the founding fathers of this republic insisted on the necessity of liberal education.

The daily papers suggest that Hitler and Mussolini [this lecture was delivered in 1938] are doing most of the choosing, most of the deciding, most of the willing these days. The day's news suggests that liberal democracies are paralyzed. If they are, it is because we twentieth-century liberals have missed the point of our own faith. We have slithered into the belief that liberty meant being left alone, and nothing else. We have come to no longer distinguish between authority and tyranny. We have forgotten that the mind that denies the authority of reason falls under the tyranny of caprice. We have forgotten that he who will not answer to the rudder must answer to the rock. We have therefore allowed totalitarian dictators to take out a copyright on words like authority and discipline, although their tyranny is a caricature of authority and their terrorism is a caricature of discipline.

It is high time that those Americans who value liberalism should restate their faith in it, not negatively as we so often do these days, but positively; that we freely and gladly assume the responsibilities of liberty as well as its privileges. For though most liberals today are soft, there is nothing soft about liberalism. I spoke in one of these radio talks of the famous funeral oration which Pericles made over the Athenian dead. At a crucial point in that oration, Pericles boasts of the relationship between the free Athenian and the laws he made and lived by. Last month I asked a New Program student [the New Program—our Program—was introduced in 1937] to reduce this paragraph to a single sentence, and this is what I got: “We reverence the laws and the laws respect us.” I think he did a good job. Pericles was proud of Athenian freedom and insisted it was worth dying for. Our ancestors shared that pride and that insistence. But they and he were proud, not of the absence of discipline or authority, but of the fact that in a society of free citizens discipline and authority are self-imposed. I too should insist they were worth dying for. But I should not want to die for an external discipline imposed on me by tyranny; nor should I want to die for the right to be without any discipline at all.

We liberals have erred, I suspect, through asking too little. We have asked for what animals and small children want, but not what free men and women require. We have shouted hysterically for

freedom of speech, a free press, and free assembly, while one by one these freedoms have disappeared in one modern state after another. And we have asked ourselves fearfully whether we too would lose these freedoms. But we have not demanded, as our ancestors did, both for themselves and their children, a mind free from ignorance, an awakened imagination, and a disciplined reason, without which we cannot effectually use our other freedoms or even preserve them. We have demanded, quite properly, the right to make our own mistakes, but we have not demanded the capacities that would enable us to understand our mistakes when we have made them.

I think this Harvard friend of ours, who has tried to express his conception of what St. John's College stands for today, has stated something essential for you and me to understand, not merely because you and I belong to the College which this seal of his celebrates, but because you and I, like him, are free American citizens. I am sorry my translation of the motto he has furnished is so dull: “I make free men out of boys by means of books and balances.” I have lost the magnificent Latin punning: *FACIO LIBEROS EX LIBERIS LIBRIS LIBRAQUE*. These strong Latin words remind us of words the Latins gave us. For we liberals cannot exercise our liberties without knowing how to deliberate. Without that power, we are children. Fortunately, there are books that record for us the deliberations of men who outgrew childhood, who knew how to weigh, to balance choices, to decide. These books are models of analysis, in which issues are clarified, so that real choices, deliberate choices, can be made. They propound and propose alternative solutions to problems that are still with us under different guise. And the different books state alternative issues against each other.

And there are not books alone to help us. There are balances. Balances and other laboratory instruments which teach us to measure, to compare, to discriminate, to combine, to understand. The liberal arts, the intellectual arts that liberate the mind, operating through these same books and these same balances, liberalized and humanized our fathers, and their fathers before them. They can liberate our children too. They can make free men out of our children, teach them to live in a liberal democracy, and to make real choices, after due deliberation. Then our children would understand liberalism, where our own sloth and incomprehension have left it languid, vulnerable, irrational, and therefore hysterical.

How to Survive the Dining Hall in 13 Easy Steps

By Anonymous

1. Don't fall into the trap of eating the only thing that looks good (e.g., a hot dog) every day. Vegetables are important!
2. Speaking of vegetables, however, avoid the squash. Best get veggies from the salad bar.
3. But be careful regarding the salad bar! Sometimes items will be rotten. Also, there's plenty of cross contamination; if you have an allergy, beware.
4. For non-salad bar items as well, be very careful if you have an allergy. (Speaking from anonymous personal experience! Unless you need an excuse to skip seminar.)
5. If you don't have an allergy, but still have dietary restrictions, make sure to check out the vegan and gluten free mini fridges. There's also a kimchi mini fridge, by the way, if you need more spice in your life.
6. Condiments are another way to add some spice to your food. Don't be afraid to steal the ketchup from another table. (Though make sure to ask politely first.)
7. Be polite to the staff as well! "Appreciate the fuck out of Chucky!" And don't use your hands instead of tongs, or put buttered toast in the toaster, unless you'd like to get scolded.
8. Also don't use the cups for anything other than drinks—but speaking of cups, isn't it great that they use sustainable ones? And that they recycle and compost!
9. And the effort they put into desserts is admirable. You can always count on the vegan desserts to be good, as well as the ice cream (not vegan, sadly), and the fries (not dessert, technically).
10. You can also always count on the juices to be good—not the coffee, though.
11. Speaking of coffee, there's also the coffee shop as a nice option if you are not feeling the dining hall. The prices are pretty good—and there's also pick-3.
12. Or if you are feeling the dining hall but not the loudness of your fellow Johnnies, there are greenies so you can take food out.
13. Or, you know, you could just go to Chipotle...

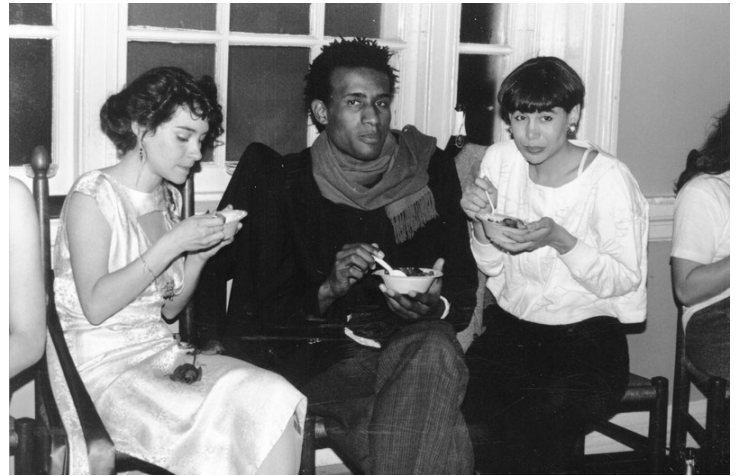


*Students Eating in the Randall Hall Dining Hall
with Bow-Tie Waiters*

Why Waltz?

By Vivian Miyakawa

“Grapes, cheese, crackers... anything else?” “Apples!” my roommate exclaims as I quickly jot down her requests in my Notes app. After taking her order, I whirl around to fix my lip gloss in the mirror and blow a kiss goodbye as I skip out the door. Ziplock bag in hand and dressed to perfection, I am headed to another St. John’s College waltz. On my way there, I run into some friends. Amidst of our flurry of compliments, I’m asked if I plan to dance the night away. Jokingly, I crack a smile and hold up my bags. “My roommate says I’m not allowed to dance until I bring her back some snacks.” Giggling ensues as they immediately comprehend the importance of my mission. Rushing through the doors, I meet a friend working the snack table and let her grab me “fresh snacks” from underneath the table. I take a small amount of each offering and shove it in the Ziplock. The music swells in the background as I gaze upon the delicacies before me. Babybel cheese, mini croissants, Ferrero Rocher chocolate—yes, we are truly living the high life.



Three Students Seated with Bowls of Food

Proud of my foraging victory, I rush back up the stairs of my dorm and hand the food over to my roommate, who is working diligently on an essay.

Once I’ve made my way back to the waltz, I am ready to do some dancing. I grab a partner, put on a smile, and let myself get lost in the music. I try to recall my Tuesday waltz lessons, and count steps in my head. I’m a bit of a clumsy dancer, but I have so much fun every time. After twirling across the dance floor for a few songs, another friend elbows me in the side. “How come you haven’t been dancing this whole time?” We laugh together for a moment, then I find my way back to the snack table once more, where the same people who had just witnessed me shoving copious amounts of chocolate and cheese into my bag are still deep in conversation. Eventually, I head up the stairs and lean against the balcony, watching the dancers from above. I look around to see alumni couples holding on to each other, perhaps reminiscing on their own time at these waltzes. Smiling to myself, I think about the sheer number of reasons people have for attending the waltzes. From snacks, to conversation, to dancing, or even just being an observer in the moment, there really is something for everyone to enjoy.



Waltz Party, A View from the Balcony in the Great Hall of McDowell Hall

The SJC Mystery #2: Location, Location, Location

By Bennett “Worked in Real Estate for One Summer” Scott

In my pursuit of the stone’s meaning, I’ve garnered plenty of theories: it’s a freemason symbol; it’s an astrological sign; it’s an Icelandic rune. I have gone so far as making my first Facebook post (ever) and got responses including: it might be an ornamental version of 羊 (yang), meaning goat in Mandarin (this was quickly rejected by the next comment); it might be Ij-H-C, someone’s initials in the Dutch alphabet; it might be the logo of a Greek house (a naval academy hit piece?); it might be Sintic or Mongol or Ogham script; it might be a stone mason’s mark, though a little bit elaborate; it might just be the shape of a stick shift. Some people shrug and say it’s just a prank. Some people look at me with genuine fear and make me promise never to take it off campus.

Examining the stone itself more has only made things worse. It’s made of the same stone as used in parts of McDowell and all across the quad. It doesn’t fit perfectly into its hole; instead, it has roughly hewn sides but a perfectly flat bottom. The symbol is carved almost too perfectly in comparison to the slipshod jaggedness of the edges. I sat (during a party, music and voices blasting) staring at it and realized: some of the tiles of this type are smooth, some are rough. The tile that the stone is in is a perfectly smooth tile. The stone itself, though, has a rough top. So was the stone cut out from a separate tile and then put into this one? Who would put it there? Is it intentionally ambiguous? I can’t find dates; I can’t find reasons; all I can find are more and more ambiguous pieces of information. You see the problem? I’ve got a lot of theories, but no hard evidence. So I did what any good (para?)normal investigator does: went entirely off the rails.

My life rule from the last article (don’t do anything that would start a horror movie) might be said to have a parallel, but stronger postulate about the world at large: *All bad vibes converge*. So how do you find out about the accursed stone? Pursue all other sources of discomfort, dislike, and disgust and eventually you’ll find something related. Luckily, if there’s one thing this college excels at, it’s spooky locations. Since you and I are such good friends my dear reader, I figure I ought to take you on a little tour of some of my favorites:

Under Pub Safe: If you happen to need a break from talking with the wonderful folks at public safety (the only people who know more about bad-vibe locals on this campus than I), just step out that door, take a quick right and then another and there



*Trees by the Side of Pinkney Hall, St. John's College,
Annapolis, Maryland*

you go: a storm cellar door. This one requires a little bit of work to open and close, but once you've waded your way into the darkness, you'll be swallowed up in the sort of shadow where you know there are walls nearby, just not exactly where. The unfortunate thing is that you'll find (with the help of a flashlight or some simple flailing around) a lightswitch. Turn it on and surprise: it's literally just a room with pipes. Not that exciting and a little too risky for my tastes.

The Pit: Is this one scary? Kind of? More just disgusting. Imagine me (wait no imagine me a little taller than that I promise I'm 6 feet tall) and my roommate, two Western boys in an East coast world, headed to the gym. Just outside of the entrance is a rectangle of bricks with a sheet of rusted metal on top. If anything says "Two 20 year old boys are going to be curious about me," this screamed it. So I took the tetanus risk and lifted the sheet. Light barely cuts across one side of the hole at a shallow angle, leaving all else black. There's water running some ten or fifteen feet below. My roommate points his phone down the hole and turns on the flashlight. Roaches. A hundred of them. At least. They all run towards the bottom of the hole and you can hear it, the ghastly bug on bag stampeding. I promptly say "Fuck that" and put the top back on. We moved on with our lives, doing our best not to have nightmares. I checked the pit again recently and found no roaches. I don't want to know where they all went.

Under Mellon: Now for the place I hate more than anywhere else in the world! Under Mellon (down a not very well hidden stairway), there's a door. According to you and public safety, I've never opened that door and never will, but if it just so happened to be open one night, you would most certainly find the heebie-jeebie-est spot on campus. I opened the door and knew one thing: this space is bigger. Much bigger than all the others. So big that any light I used was swallowed up, leaving me in a half formed hall of concrete and dusk. The first thing

you see upon entering are chairs, stacked upside down and right side up and every other direction, all brown and black and tan and most certainly hiding something on the far side. There are pianos too, perfect for playing single, unexplained notes. The floors and walls are unchanging grey and the ceiling is all pipes. Reality does not have a heavy hold on this place; there's always something there, just out of reach. But it's not just the long hallway: there are attached rooms and a doorway that breaks up the space. There is no way to see everything around you, no way to look around every corner. All you can do is venture deeper into the deep, deep dark.

Honorable mention: The random door from Gilliam that leads to a one story drop? Classic.

Under the Yellow House: The yellow house on the Southwest side of campus is all dissonance: why, amongst the tall brick walls aspiring to colonial grandeur, is there this little prairie home with its wood sides and white trim? I've never been inside. I've never seen anyone come in or out. It's supposedly the alumni house. All that matters to me is that, on the parking lot side, there is yet another storm cellar door.

And you won't believe what I found there (am I getting better at this clickbaiting stuff?). Check out the video for a bad vibes compilation and a special discovery (I'm laughing, aren't you?):



Swish: Motion of Fish *By Ella Jacky*

Moss, rocks, tank, fish
 Tranquil, serene, fins that swish
 Sleek, shine, sway, flow
 Everchanging, moving slow
 Fins, rotate, fore, rear
 Swirling in a cyclic sphere
 Down, push, up, swoop
 Never-ending eight-shaped loop
 Fins, sheer, sheen, thin
 Twirling gently, sudden when-
 Tail shift, now flick
 Fluid, flashing, turning quick
 Arched bend, left, right
 Swift through water, swimming flight
 Beats pulse through spine
 Even rhythm, keeping time
 Waves bend, move, shift
 Lilting meter, cadence swift
 Swish, slip, dart, slide
 To a corner, buggy eyed,
 Peer out, eyes shift
 Goggling, staring, rhythmic drift
 Swirl, fins, front, back
 Jaw is gaping, mouth is slack

In flux, gills pulse
 Contract, expand, now convulse
 Fins slip, skim, swim,
 Spinning over, now again
 All times, shift, change
 Yet ever same; wonder strange
 Motion quick and motion slow
 Fish in constant ebb and flow



*A Tree and the Dock on College Creek,
 Annapolis, Maryland*

The Rose

By Kurtis Bleakley

How Tender is
The sweetness there,
The fragrance of a rose,
Lasting for a moment,
Inhaled through the nose
How precious that I, and I alone,
In a hair's breadth of time,
Can take unto myself this eternal beauty.

What wonder you are, flower!
Delight to the eye and the breath,
Would that you could last forever,
With your fragrance of a rose

I wish for a love like you, sweet flower,
A delightful love,
A love to capture world entire in its embrace,
A love to make beauty become all things.
And a love to make the godly and the beautiful a
wondrous union,
And love that loves all love, and all loving and lovely
things therein,

But I already have that,
Because of this moment and that fragrance of a rose.

Noodles 02: “The Overly Optimistic Crosswalk Button”

By Tamar Pinsky





Eva Brann, circa 1986

A special colloquy was organized honoring the now-retired icon of St. John's College.

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

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Pictured: The Gadfly Office (Photo by Luke Briner)

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